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ABSTRACT

Idaho's displaced homemaker program exists to reduce the incidence of poverty among the 59,498 displaced homemakers (according to the 1990 census) and 22,147 single mothers in the state. Of those who participated in Idaho's displaced homemaker programs in fiscal year 1999 (FY1999), 852 (33%) earned less than $5,000 annually. Yet, only 95 received welfare payments, and only 511 received food stamps. Idaho's displaced homemakers are served by a network of Centers for New Directions that sponsor activities designed to prepare participants for employment and/or educational opportunities. Highlights from the centers' activities for FY1999 include the following: 6-week employment readiness classes; support groups to help employment readiness training graduates continue to work toward self-sufficiency; intensive pre-employment preparation classes at Pocatello Women's Correctional Center; work experience, internships, and volunteer opportunities at Eastern Idaho Technical College to help participants work toward their career goals; classes for divorcing parents and for unemployed and underemployed participants; and a conference focusing on opportunities for women in skilled nontraditional occupations. In FY1999, Idaho's centers for new directions served 2,549 participants, of whom 803 entered the labor market, 1,081 entered school/training, and 96 enrolled in nontraditional training. Demographic information about the FY1999 displaced homemaker program participants is appended. (MN)

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Professional-Technical Education
Legislative Report

Idaho
Displaced Homemaker
Programs

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The Need:

Why Have Displaced Homemaker Programs In Idaho?

According to the 1990 Census[1], there were **59,498** displaced homemakers in Idaho. Over half of them are over 64 years old. More than one-third of all displaced homemakers in Idaho have incomes below the poverty level. Ninety percent of those under 25 years of age live in poverty. Approximately 10,000 have children under 18 years of age. Sixty percent of displaced homemakers with children live below poverty level and thirty percent of those without children live below poverty level. Forty-nine percent of employed displaced homemakers had incomes below poverty level.

A ***displaced homemaker*** is a person who, through loss of economic support, must enter the workforce to support herself and family. She may be widowed, separated, deserted, abused, divorced or her husband may no longer be able to support her.

Idaho has **22,147** single mothers (including 1,133 teen mothers, ages 15-19). This group as a whole is younger than Idaho displaced homemakers; fifty-four percent are under age 35. Less than one percent are 65 or older. They are all parents. Over half have incomes below or near poverty level. Thirty-six percent of employed single mothers live below poverty level.

A ***single mother*** is a woman who is a householder with children and who is separated, divorced, widowed or never married. She may be working full-time. She may or may not be a "displaced homemaker."

Of those who participated in Idaho's displaced homemaker programs in FY99, 852 (33%) made less than $5,000. Yet, only 95 received welfare payments and only 511 received food stamps. Most were trying to survive without public assistance. Sixty-eight percent (1,727) of participants were the major financial support for their families (compared to 52% last year). Sixty-four percent (1,624) had custody of their children. Only fifteen percent received child support. Characteristics of participants are included in Appendix A.

The most important difference between families headed by women and those headed by men still overwhelmingly remains the incidence of poverty. These women face the additional reality of being unable to support themselves and their dependent children. The Idaho Displaced Homemaker Program was established to address this need.

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[1] From WOMEN WORK, POVERTY PERSISTS: A Status Report on Displaced Homemakers & Single Mothers in Idaho (August 1994).

The Response:

How Are Single Parents And Displaced Homemakers Being Served In Idaho?

Background

In 1980, the Idaho State Legislature passed the "Equal Opportunity For Displaced Homemaker Act" (Senate Bill 1355), authorizing the State Division of Vocational Education "to establish counseling centers to assist homemakers who, because of death, disability, or separation from the family breadwinner, are facing the necessity to maintain themselves for the first time." In 1982, Idaho Senate Bill 1306 increased the divorce fee by $20 to establish a dedicated fund for the Division of Vocational Education to operate displaced homemaker centers throughout the state.

When the Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act came into effect in 1984, the State Division of Vocational Education developed a statewide plan to serve single parents/ displaced homemakers through the existing network. Carl Perkins monies strengthened the displaced homemaker centers and enabled them to expand services and reach out into the rural communities.

In 1991, the Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act was re-authorized. Although the set-aside for single parent/displaced homemaker programs was retained, the level of funding was reduced. The Idaho Legislature appropriated general account dollars to make up the loss.

In 1998, the new Carl Perkins Vocational & Applied Technology Education Act was passed and the set-aside for single parent/displaced homemaker programs was eliminated. This resulted in a loss of approximately 70% of funding to the Centers for New Directions.

Description

In Idaho, adult single parents and displaced homemakers are served through a network of counseling centers called "Centers for New Directions." These Centers are Idaho's specific effort to meet the employment readiness needs of this population. The Centers are situated on the campuses of the six technical colleges which are located regionally to best serve the majority of Idaho residents. They provide a full range of services targeted for single parents and displaced homemakers, as well as complement the support services already in place on these campuses.

The Centers for New Directions provided the following services for over 2,500 single parents and displaced homemakers as they moved from dependence to independence: personal, career and educational counseling; assessment and testing; training in life skills; preparation for employment and training; and supportive services. Vocational Equity grants allowed each Center to provide pre-vocational training and/or financial stipends for participants wishing to enter a non-traditional professional-technical education program.

From their inception, the Centers were designed to cooperate with local service providers to avoid duplication. Efforts were coordinated with local Job Service offices, Health & Welfare offices, private industry councils, and the technical colleges, in order to provide a comprehensive program to single parents and displaced homemakers. The Centers played an integral part in the employment and training delivery system in their regions.

Highlights of FY99 Activities

The Centers for New Directions sponsored activities which helped participants prepare for employment and/or educational opportunities. They also provided training in life skills and self-sufficiency. Highlights of activities from Fiscal Year 1999 follow.

• The cornerstone of Center for New Directions activities were employment readiness classes. These in-depth six-week-long classes included: decision-making, interpersonal communication, self-esteem building, personal grooming and developing work habits such as getting to work on time and calling in when sick. Three hundred thirty (330) individuals participated in employment readiness classes in FY99. This was an increase over last year.

• The Lewis-Clark State College Center for New Directions included a support group for Employment Readiness Training (ERT) graduates to help them work toward their goals of self-sufficiency. They also offered an employment readiness class at the Lapwai Reservation for Native Americans.

• The College of Southern Idaho Center for New Directions continued a competency based curriculum, ***WorkSmart***, which covers effective job keeping skills. ***WorkSmart*** is now offered as a credit class at the College of Southern Idaho.

• The Idaho State University Center for New Directions provided intensive pre-employment preparation classes at the Pocatello Women's Correctional Center. These activities were designed to help incarcerated women make the transition into the workplace and to reduce recidivism.

• At Eastern Idaho Technical College, the Center offered work experience, internships and volunteer opportunities to help participants proceed toward their career goals. They also offered a 40-hour entry-level Office and Computer Skills class to help clients succeed at an entry-level office position or a more advanced training program. This class has produced the greatest number of positive outcomes for participants.

• The North Idaho College Center provided a monthly class for divorcing parents in Kootenai County. Another class, developed specifically for parents experiencing high conflict divorce, was offered every other month. These classes served 135 divorcing parents in FY99.

• The Center at North Idaho College continued a class called ***CareerWise*** to address the needs of unemployed and underemployed participants. This class taught the skills employers identified as the most important in the workforce. Three classes enrolled a total of 46 participants.

• Each Center for New Directions received an equity grant to serve single parents and displaced homemakers. Through career counseling, workshops, pre-vocational training, non-traditional support groups and stipends, 1013 single parents and displaced homemakers were impacted. As a result, 144 women were enrolled in or continued nontraditional postsecondary training programs.

• Eighty-two (82) participated in the ***Job Options for Women*** conference at Idaho Falls (EITC), focusing on the advantages of skilled nontraditional occupations.

Results:

What Impact Is Being Made?

The Centers for New Directions have been instrumental in motivating participants to take action in their lives, to eliminate self-defeating behavior patterns, to adopt a more positive attitude toward work and school, and to develop confidence which will enable them to work and become financially self-sufficient. The centers have focused on improving the **quality** of services to achieve better results. This year, 74% (an increase over last year) of those served entered jobs and/or training programs. Participant outcomes are provided in the table below.

Centers For New Directions
Participant Outcomes
Fiscal Year 1999

Total Participants[1] Served:	2549
Services Provided:	
Center Sponsored Activities	358
Individual Counseling Services	3970
Participant Outcomes:	
Entered Labor Market	803
Entered School/Training	1081
Enrolled in Nontraditional Training	96

[1] *To be counted as a Center participant, a person must have received a minimum of three activities: intake counseling, a program service, and followup.*

Women Succeed .... in school and in jobs

(Real names have not been used in these stories)

Pam was 46 years old when she arrived at the Center. She had no income and was consumed by her sense of failure. Her children were grown, but not able to provide her with financial assistance. With the help of counseling, career interest assessment; and an investigation of her talents and abilities, Pam decided to enroll in school and pursue a career in drafting. She was also able to find a part-time job in sales and sewing machine demonstration. In school, Pam excelled in her pre-requisite classes for drafting, earning a 4.0 grade point average. She so impressed the drafting instructor with her desire to learn and determination that he selected her as his work-study student for the semester. Pam has now put all thoughts of failure behind her and looks forward to her drafting program this year. (NIC)

❦❦❦

Kathy is a young single mother enrolled in the Heating/Ventilation & Air Conditioning Program at North Idaho College. Kathy did well in her program but considered dropping out when she was unable to meet her utility bills during second semester. The Center for New Directions helped Kathy obtain finances to pay her bills so she could stay in school. She was placed in a paid work experience which turned into a full-time job paying over $10 per hour. Kathy is the first woman in 10 years to complete the HVAC program!

❦❦❦

Judy was in prison on drug-related charges when she first received services from the Center for New Directions. She enrolled in a computer class for the summer and was released from jail every day to attend. She excelled in the class and was enthused about using her new skills in the workplace. She continued to get support from the Center as well. (NIC)

❦❦❦

When **Susan** entered the Employment Readiness Training (ERT) class, she was frightened and unsure of herself but she attended every day and participated in the activities. After finishing ERT, she completed her G.E.D. In place of the frightened individual was a radiant woman who crossed the stage to receive her diploma. (LCSC)

❦❦❦

Nancy, a former client, who was a single parent, visited the Center recently and related that she was in the process of completing a doctorate and working for a social service agency. (LCSC)

❦❦❦

Cathi, recently graduated from the Employment Readiness Class, completed her Certified Nursing Assistance program and is now employed in the field. (LCSC)

Ida, a mother of four children, came to the Center when her husband was incarcerated. After career assessment and counseling, Ida chose to enter the Semiconductor Manufacturing Technology Program. When she completes this program next year, she will be able to earn $15-16/hour. (BSU)

❦❦❦

Mary is a 47-year old single mother with two daughters. Due to welfare reform, she came to the Center looking for ways to support her family. She had relied on public assistance but no longer qualified for these benefits. She had always wanted to be a nurse but was afraid that she would never pass. After she toured the LPN and RN programs, she said, "Wow! Those students aren't any different from me!" She had met some nursing students who were very encouraging to her. She qualified for JTPA and will be finishing her program this Spring. (ISU)

❦❦❦

Amber was a fisheries technology student struggling to cover the expenses of school. She regularly attended the support group meetings and completed a co-op at the Hagerman National Fish Hatchery. After completing her technical certificate, an Alaskan hatchery hired her. "Thank you so much for the support and funds," she wrote in a postcard. "They both helped tons to get me up here. Work is good; it's beautiful up here." (CSI)

❦❦❦

Sue has completed her first year in the Automotive Technology program with help from the Centers for New Directions. She is a single mother of three children and "knowing that I would become the sole care giver to my children, I decided to further my education." Sue realized she had a good mechanical aptitude and always enjoyed working on vehicles with her Dad. She knew this was a nontraditional field, but "chose to ignore the ... opinions of other people" in moving toward a prosperous future for herself and her children. (ISU)

❦❦❦

Ann is a single mother of a three-year old son and has completed her third semester of the Laser Electro-optics program. She is carrying a 3.2 GPA while working part-time. Ann is highly regarded and has been elected president of the electronics program chapter of VICA for the year 1999-2000. Ann is interested in a career in laser optics technology and plans to "become part of an interesting, challenging, future-oriented career with the opportunity for growth and a good living for my child and myself." (ISU)

❦❦❦

The Center helped **Barbara** change employment where she doubled her work hours, increased her salary and gained benefits for herself and her family. She wrote, "Thank you for all your help for me and my family!"

And finally, "I believe the Center for New Directions is completely necessary for everyone who is trying to better themselves. It gives you the confidence to move forward and all the resources necessary to assist you if you're unable to do so on your own!" (EITC)

The Centers for New Directions
A Smart Investment

If a single parent with two dependent children entered the labor market and left welfare, there would be substantial savings to the state. Below is a chart showing dollars saved in relation to wages earned. The Centers for New Directions help single parents overcome barriers to success and assist them in obtaining skills needed to seek and find employment that pays a livable wage.

By conservative estimates, the Centers for New Directions enabled enough women and their families to leave welfare and join the work force to save the state more than one million dollars in public assistance. In addition, employed center participants are now paying more than $300,000 annually in state taxes.

From Welfare to Work: Potential Cost Benefit
Fiscal Year 1999

Single Parent with Two Dependent Children					
Hourly Rate	Annual Wages Earned	Annual State Taxes Paid[1]	Annual Federal Taxes Paid[1]	Average Welfare Savings[2]	TOTAL COST BENEFIT
$ 5.75	$11,960	$ 66.30	$ 158.60	$ 7,332	$ 7,556.90
$ 8.00	$16,640	$ 341.38	$ 860.60	$ 7,332	$ 8,533.98
$10.00	$20,800	$ 661.70	$1,484.60	$ 7,332	$ 9,478.30

[1] Taxes figured on a 40-hour work week; paid bi-weekly for a single parent with two dependents.
[2] TAFI ($276/month) + Food Stamps ($335/month) = $611/mo. x 12 = $7,332/year

Appendix A

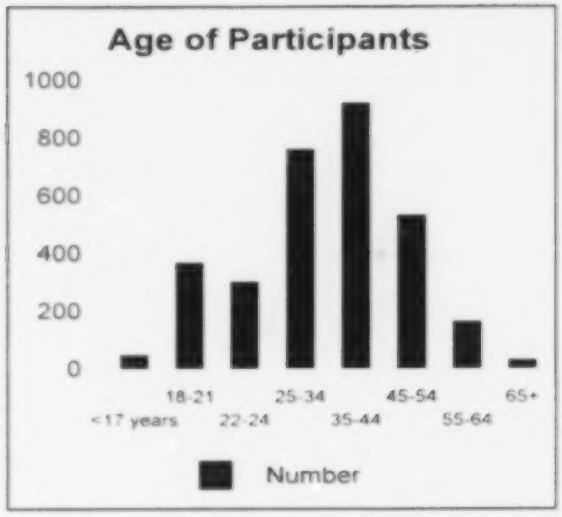
Participant Demographics
FY1999

Personal Characteristics

Eighty-one percent of the participants served were women; nineteen percent were men.

The majority of participants were white. Six percent were Hispanic and three percent were Native American.

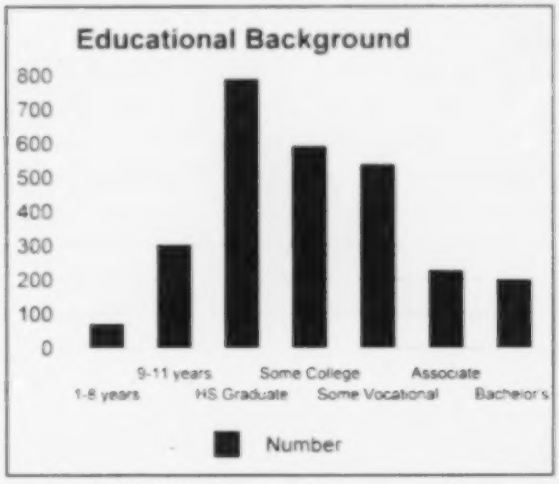
Most participants were between the ages of 25 and 45. (see table).



(Data Source: State Division of Professional-Technical Education, 1999)

Educational Status

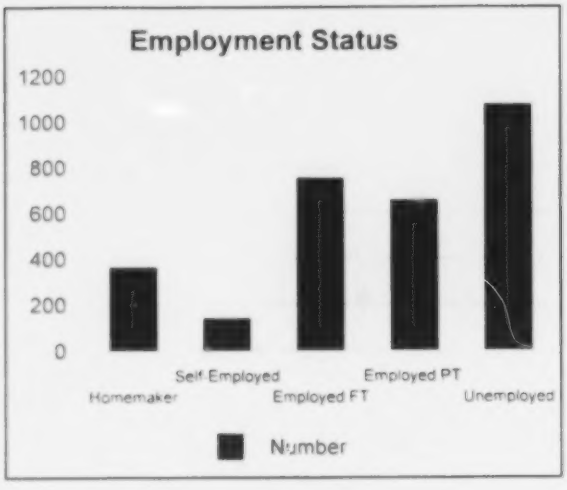
The majority of Center participants have graduated from high school or have some postsecondary training. However, 370 did not complete high school and often needed study skills, GED, and tutoring before they could enter vocational programs. Three hundred twenty-one individuals received their GED's in FY99. This chart shows the educational level of individuals served in FY99.



(Data Source: State Division of Professional-Technical Education, 1999)

Employment Status

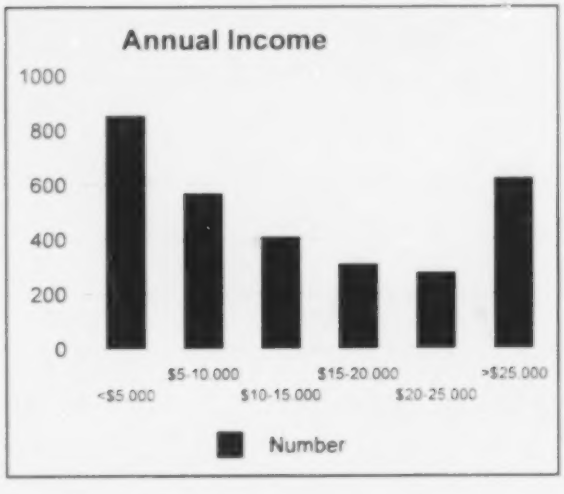
Eleven percent of single parents and displaced homemakers served by the Centers were full-time homemakers. The number who were unemployed and seeking employment was 1,071. Most of the others held some type of job. The number of people who were employed full-time (750) continues to increase. A breakdown of their employment status is shown on the chart.



(Data Source: State Division of Professional-Technical Education, 1999)

Economic Status

The Centers for New Directions give priority to individuals with the greatest financial need. Over 800 participants (28%) made less than $5,000. Two-thirds received below poverty level incomes. A more detailed breakdown of their annual incomes is presented in the tables. Those making over $25,000 are typically married individuals seeking help before their divorce.

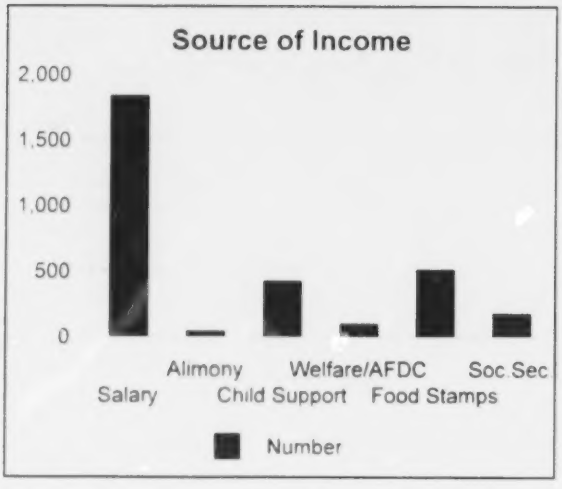


(Data Source: State Division of Professional-Technical Education, 1999)

Source of Income

The next table shows the source of income received. The majority (72%) of single parents and displaced homemakers earned their own income.

Only one percent received alimony and only fifteen percent obtained child support. Four percent received public assistance. Eighteen percent received food stamps. What is especially interesting to note is that 852 individuals made less than $5,000 but only 95 received welfare payments and only 511 were obtaining food stamps.



(Data Source: State Division of Professional-Technical Education, 1999)

Dependent Status

Sixty percent (1,632) participants provided the major financial support for their families. Fifty-seven percent (1,624) had custody of their children. One hundred eighteen were providing care for an invalid.

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